

Caught in a Storm Mark 4 verses 35-41

(story repeated in Matthew 8 verses 23-27 and Luke 8 verses 22-25)

Background and Introduction

This story is echoed in **Psalm 107 vs 23-31**. Reading them together gives us some fuller meaning.

Routines: We all have them, whether it is in the morning or evening or at other times. Some are more ritualistic in their routines and have to do things in a certain order too. It was the same for the disciples in this story; this was routine for most of them. But something caught them unawares, though they were experienced fishermen.

So what do we do and how do we react to the sudden changes and storms of life that come on us and by which we are often caught 'off guard,' or 'coming from left field.'? What these storms of life bring us are a feeling of insecurity as though our whole world, to a greater or lesser degree is shaken and our security is challenged.

Charles Stanley says, '**Storms are inevitable, God is immovable.**' If we do not understand who God is in the storms of life we are lost and directionless.

The Context-Was this a test? In the narrative Jesus has been teaching about faith to His disciples and revealing to them personally what his parables about the Kingdom of God were really all about. He kept the meaning for those he taught for His disciples. It is as if Jesus is saying, '*Right guys, we've done the theory, now here's the real thing!*'

Does God test us? Yes I believe He does. If we are His child nothing comes our way that He has not somehow orchestrated or been a part of. I believe in the providence of God. God wants the best for us, He knows us so well that He knows our limitations; whatever comes our way He has a purpose in it.

The point is where is our faith in the midst of the storms of life? This is the question which Jesus leaves with His disciples at the end of this story.

1) Jesus Leads them verses 35-36

Jesus led them to go the other side of the Lake. There was a purpose to this partly so they could have a rest from the people but also Jesus knew another spiritual battle was coming (see **Mark 5**). It was the disciples who 'took Jesus along with them in the boat'. Jesus gave the lead and they followed.

Application: If we believe God is ordering our lives He will lead us into things which test and challenge us. **John 10 v 3-4**, Jesus leads the sheep out; He goes before us and prepares the way.

2) This was a freak storm verse 37

The Sea of Galilee- was known for freak storms and under currents; it is 21kms in length and 13kms in width.

There arose a fierce gale of wind so fierce that it caused the waves to pour into the boat and beginning to fill it up with water. This was massive and sudden and unexpected. This scared even these experienced fishermen who would have had a healthy respect for the lake. This was not *routine* for them **and we know this because of their reaction**. The boat was the disciple's security from drowning and the sea overtaking them. This storm was such that it threatened their life.

Nothing was the same and the things they could rely on were beginning to fail them. This unusual storm but it had connection in the spiritual world as Jesus had a mission on the other side of the Lake to sort (see Mark 5).

Application: Life happens to us sometimes and it can shake our very security and the things we have used to rely on do not work anymore or are taken from us. Sometimes things come at us like a flood as though we are going to drown and we wonder when will this ever stop?

Nothing is a surprise to God, **He is Omniscient**; He knows everything about us all the time and has always known us. Often in our most desperate times, when all supports have been taken away we only have Him and then He breaks through. When we are at the end of our own striving and fighting a losing battle we have nowhere else to run. God can sometimes strip us of all so we can find Him again.

'Oftentimes, our deepest need in the midst of chronic weakness not quick relief but confidence that God is working through our mess for a good purpose in our lives. God will not allow the thorn to be taken away because he knows self-sufficiency is on the surface, ready to rise again. Our total dependence on Him is more important than the relief from the pain. Our complete reliance on Jesus is God's goal.' David Chadwick in 'From Superficial to Significant.'

He knows you so well, he knows you can handle it. He trusts you with it.

The storms of life get our attention; sometimes God has to get our attention

Storms come from three sources:

- ***They are from God***, He permits them
- ***They are the enemy*** but God knows they are and God uses them to test us
- ***We have made the storm***; our own mistakes and deliberate actions have consequences. Repentance is needed here and we can cry out to God to make things good for us (**Romans 8 v 28**).
Isaiah, when talking to the people in exile in chapter 40 v 10, declares that God is with us through the trials and things which come our way. We forget that this was said in the context of disobedience. God was talking to a people who had gone astray; they were in difficulty because of their sin. He does not always bring us **OUT** of difficulties but is with us **IN THEM**, by the power of His Holy Spirit, wherever they might come from..
- ***The storms are from others*** and the impact of others on us

Overall, what appears to be a storm is the work of God, what is He doing? He is at work in the storm. He is behind it all, weaving and working His purposes out no matter where they started.

3) Jesus is asleep in the stern of the boat verse 38a

Jesus is asleep, apparently unaware of the storm and the trouble it was causing his friends. Jesus is in a place of rest in the midst of the storm. He knows His Father is looking after them. He knows the winds and seas are ultimately controlled by Him. He rests in the midst of the storm. Jesus is in the boat. He is in the midst of the effect of the storm. He is asleep but the disciples are in a panic. The contrast here is, the rest of trust that Jesus portrays and the doubt of faith demonstrated by the disciples.

Application: ***The aim of faith for us is not to be phased by our storms***, we can feel them and even our physiological response can be all out of sorts but in the midst of them we can know His hand and His deep sense of peace. We can choose to allow them to dictate to us or we can reign in life,

knowing Jesus is in the boat. We can welcome and embrace the storms as God ordained and be open to what He wants to teach us.

Just because Jesus is not apparently responding at this point in the story, does it mean He is not there? In this story, Jesus was there but asleep.

So what happens when we are confronted with our own storm and it might appear that God does not respond or it appears He is not working. Can we in the midst of a storm of life remain in a place of rest, knowing He is sorting it, rather than responding in panic? God does not always run to our aid, He sometimes waits to see what we do with what He has ordained. He is not sleeping and oblivious to our suffering but he sometimes waits.

It is not what happens to us in life it is how we respond? Instead of asking why? We should be asking-‘What is it you want to teach me this time? We can learn this by always taking everything to Him.

4) The disciples awake Jesus in desperation verse 38b

They wake him up and cry, ‘Do you not care that we are perishing?’ Their first statement is, ‘Do you not care?’ So what does that say about their belief of God? They demonstrate a fear of dying wondering why Jesus has done nothing, as though He does not care. They are saying He does not care for them and they are doubting both this and who He is. They perhaps had expectations that he would deliver, seeing Him perform miracles-‘ if you can do this why can’t you help us out here?’ They are panicking.

Application: Do we often ask that question of God? Behind this statement we are saying-‘**When we are in the thick of it you are never there and never intervene.**’

People ask, where is God? Where was God in the midst of that? We can blame God that He did nothing to prevent things happening? **We want someone to do something in the midst of our storms and it is natural to blame God and also others, if they do not rush to our aid.** Jesus is not superman who responds always as soon as we call and rescues us. **Sometimes He waits to see how we will respond.**

Reacting to a storm-If our boat is the boat where Jesus is, despite the storms we are in the best place. Some so-called ‘stoic’ people appear calm in a storm of life, outwardly they are not panicked but inwardly they are in turmoil. There are others who hold it together but are different when on their own, not wanting to appear weak before others. Others bury the feelings of being in turmoil over years and they develop serious health problems as a result. Just because you might not appear to panic it does not mean you are not doing so and this relates to our temperament.

Our God is omnipresent; this means He is with us everywhere, all the time. He is working things out for our good, for those who love Him and are His called children ((**Romans 8 v 28**). All things here means, all good and bad and this includes the bad stuff we do and the bad stuff done to us. He is with us always by the indwelling and alongside ministry of the Holy Spirit and he will never leave us nor forsake us (**Matthew 28 v 20 and John 16 verse 16**).

Isaiah chapter 40 v 10: He does not always bring us **OUT** of difficulties but is with us **IN THEM**, by the power of His Holy Spirit. Jesus promised us trouble in this world (**John 16 v 33**) but He also said that He has overcome the world. Whatever we need to get through and overcome He has granted to us His children. Peter declares, ‘**His divine power has given us everything we need for life and Godliness...**’ (**1 Peter 1 v 3**). It is through difficulty, trials and challenges we grow in our faith.

God is not like us, who naturally want to run away and avoid difficult things and feelings. Often God wants us to face stuff head on and if we don't get it the first time round He will ensure we get it again and again until we get it. This is the God who loves us with a love that is for our good and not to harm us (**Jeremiah 29 v 6**). He desires truth in the inward parts of our being (**Psalms 51**).

5) Jesus calms the storm verse 39

Jesus rebukes the wind and then says to the sea **'Hush be still and the wind died down it became perfectly calm.'** (literally in the Greek it says, **'a great calm occurred..'** This is easy for Jesus. He is after all God and He can come and change the natural order whenever He chooses. He can deliver us as he has done often as **He is also omnipotent; all powerful.**

Here is the Godhead in action in the middle of a small lake. **Jesus stands as the eternal word of God, declaring the creative words of the Father to calm the storm; His word changes things.** It is through Jesus that everything came into the being. **The Holy Spirit of God follows through on calming the waters.**

Application: Sometimes God just intervenes and miraculously changes things. Why He does not do this every time is His business, as he knows what He is doing and what we need and how we need to grow. We need to trust Him anyway and accept the mystery, as this is something we may never have a full answer to. Someone once said to me, **'Miracles happen when we are in a corner.'**

Do we believe God could do this today? Do we believe He can change us and our circumstances for good?

Miracles are not rare it's just that they appear rare in our lives or we fail to recognise them.

6) Jesus challenges their timidity verse 40

Jesus challenges them and us today-'Do you still have no faith?' Here the words mean 'no trusting basis.' After all they were seeing and had recently heard about faith as a mustard seed growing. This was a test of their faith.

God through Moses and his team leads the people of Israel out of Egypt by miraculous means, He parts the Red Sea before them so it stands up on either side of them and they walk through on dry land. They rejoice. Then a day or two later the moaning starts, where is water where is food? God is perhaps thinking, **"Look guys I have just devastated a land of all its means of food, do you think I can't then provide food for you, my lovely people who I have just performed mighty miracles through?"**

Application: Fear is the key here in the story. The disciples are in fear of their lives. Fear is the opposite of faith. Sometime our fear and timidity is a barrier to Him working in our lives. It holds us back from all He would have us to experience. He challenges them and us for their lack of faith. How soon we forget. How fickle we are. That is why God will continually challenge us in our lives to increase our faith and face our fears.

7) The disciples are amazed and astounded verse 41

The disciples are amazed and became very much afraid (reverence) by what has happened, **'Even the wind and the seas obey Him.'** They are on a faith exploration and are only just realising who

they are dealing with. This is not the God of the book that they have read about all their lives or a vague hope of a God who might come and reveal Himself to them. **This is a God who is right there with them, in their boat.**

Application: Does God take us to a place of real reverence? Are stunned by what God does? Are we like Job, who was silenced when God began to reveal His greatness, majesty and powerful nature. We are in the presence of a Holy, Just, Righteous, Good, Almighty, Jealous, Loving God at this moment

You might be sitting there thinking, well I have never really seen God move like this anyway. ***It is arrogant of us to think***, just because we have not experienced miracles ourselves that they either did not exist or have a different explanation. Ask Him to show Himself to you. If you are His child the miracle is He has saved you and made you His own. Perhaps you have never really come to know Him? That is the point when you meet Him, things change as they did for the Disciples and their lives would never be the same again. If you meet Him and know Him your life will never be the same.

Conclusion and Summary

- **Jesus asks us through this narrative, where is your faith?**
- **Are we afraid period?**
- **Jesus wants to be found by us in the midst of the struggles we face and the surprises which come our way**
- **Can we experience the rest of faith in the midst of our storms? We need to turn to Him.**
- **Do we really believe that God will come through for us in our times of deepest need and when things appear overwhelming? Do we believe He really cares? Or perhaps you have been disappointed by God not coming through on a serious prayer for healing or a change in your circumstances?** This has perhaps taken you to a place of non-belief that God can do come through for you.
- **Might we get angry with God and others if life throws some bad stuff at us?**
- **What and who keeps us steady? Jesus and the revelation of His word to us.**
- **Are there times we need to encourage ourselves and each other with the words, 'Where is your faith? We need to be in the relationship with a person to do this.**
- **How do we respond to others when they are in the midst of storms of their own? Some respond with more pressure knowing you are going through it, even in the Church. What do people need? Encouragement, not platitudes, coming alongside, practical help, prayer.**